

Sick of Network TV, Professor Did Something About It

Center Lets People Use TV for Themselves

By STEVE MORELLO

A few years ago, Ralph Hocking, an art professor at the State University at Binghamton, got sick of the entertainment he was being fed by network television.

Today, Mr. Hocking can go to Binghamton, pick up cameras, microphone and videotape equipment, and go out and make any kind of television program he'd like.

And so can just about anyone else.

And they can show it to just about anyone they want.

Rather than simply complaining about network television, its synthesized life situation, and preoccupation with life's moments of excitement, Mr. Hocking said he decided to explore some other, more personal uses of television.

HE FOUNDED the Community Center for Television Production, with a headquarters now at 164 Court Street, Binghamton, where the community can aim the television camera and make itself the subject of television at the same time.

Mr. Hocking's creed is that television can do more than inform — especially considering what he calls the one-directional flow of information from common television.

Television can be a powerful, useful means of self-expression, and should be available to anyone who wants to master its use, just as a painter would master light and color.

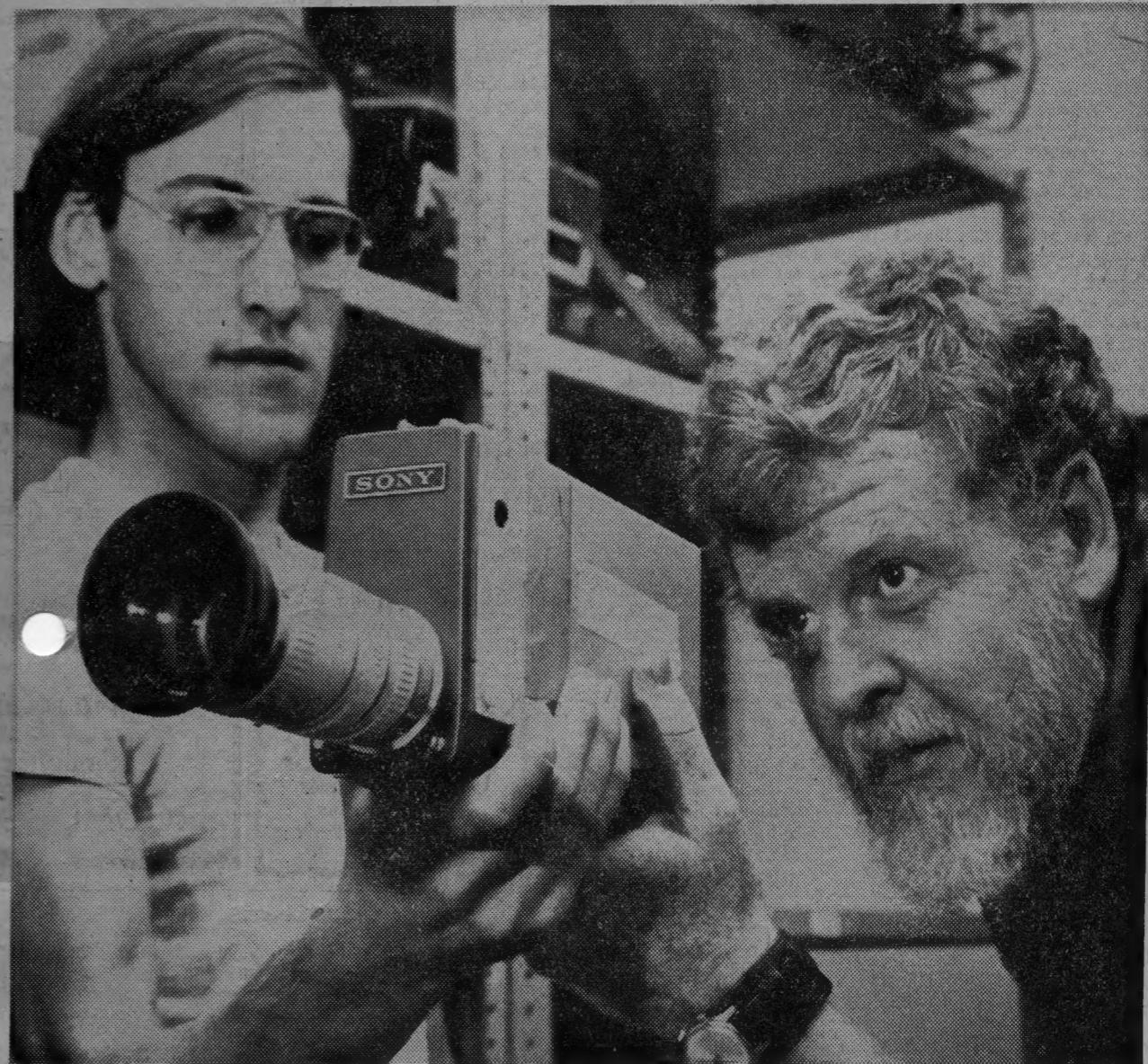
Mr. Hocking first started the center at SUAB, primarily for student use, two years ago, but then "decided to expand it to the community and make it available to people who want to use television instead of watch it," Mr. Hocking said.

THE CENTER IS BACKED BY a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, which filters the funds through WSKG-TV, the educational television station in Binghamton.

The grant is for one year and can be renewed.

The format at the center is simple:

Someone who wants to do some television work goes to the center. Mr. Hocking gives him the equipment and teach-



—PRESS PHOTOS BY PAUL KONECNY.

EQUIPMENT CHECK—Ralph Hocking at right, director of the Community Center for Television Production, and Kenneth Dominick, the center's coordinator, examine television camera.

es him how to use it, then "cuts him loose." The novice cameraman does his filming (actually video taping), and returns to view his work.

THE LITERATURE Mr. Hocking is distributing to explain the purposes of the center cites the potential of videotape communication:

"The overall power of a statement or view is increased through the use of video because it directly involves processes of perception as well

as thinking. Instead of thinking primarily in terms of writing and speaking, people can start thinking in terms of video.

"... The control of television cannot stay in the hands of a few networks but must be dispersed throughout the community so a diverse community 'voice' is formed."

At this point, Mr. Hocking said, there is no outlet for the television artist or experimenter and his work, oth-

er than the center and its members.

"THERE'S NO HANGUP about getting our stuff out to the public. If the people want the kind of stuff on television that they can do themselves, they'll find ways to do it," Mr. Hocking said.

"We're more concerned about getting people involved for themselves... with no kind of product goal in mind."

Mr. Hocking is assisted at the center by Kenneth Domin-

ick, the center's coordinator, an art graduate student at SUAB before he "just sort of walked out and started doing this."

Both admit it is difficult to keep track of how many people are participating in the center at any time. There is a constant flow of persons coming in, learning, trying and leaving, Mr. Hocking said.

THE CENTER HAS BEEN FOUND useful by several di-

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PERSONAL TELEVISION — Arnold M. Zane, 128 Clinton Street, Binghamton, a SUAB graduate student, left, and David Wilbur, 23 Liberty Street, Binghamton, a high school student, wind tapes and preview the television productions they filmed themselves for the Community Center for Television Production.

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verse groups, including the Binghamton Model Cities agency, school boards, theater and dance artists and even young athletes who felt they could improve performance by analyzing style.

The type of "programs" people at the center have

worked out cover a wide range, Mr. Hocking said.

Some have taken the equipment home, "set it up in the living room and just talked to each other."

Others, involved in more experimental television projects, have produced "esoteric experiments in light and dark," Mr. Hocking said, with images created by electronic feedback fed through machines.

THE VARIETY OF PROJECTS and their success have been "encouraging," Mr. Hocking said.

Mr. Dominick is compiling a collection of on-the-street in-

terviews discussing current issues.

While interviewing at Court and Chenango streets recently, officials of the businesses at that corner asked him if he could move on because customers had complained. The encounter was taped and later played back.

THE IMPORTANT THING, Mr. Hocking stressed, however, is that the community take advantage of the center to learn the potential use of television for themselves.

It's difficult for people to understand, he said, that they

can go out and use television for their own purposes, without being limited to watching

what network executives say they have to watch.